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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 7 April 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland)

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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING:

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GE.99-11955 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. Mr. ANNAN (Secretary-General of the United Nations), commending the work of the Commission on Human Rights in combating human rights violations and establishing norms to protect those rights, said that he had made human rights a priority in every programme and mission undertaken by the United Nations. Human rights lay at the core of the Organization's sacred bond with the peoples of the United Nations. When civilians were attacked and massacred because of their ethnicity, as in Kosovo; when men, women and children were assaulted and mutilated, as in Sierra Leone; when women and girls were denied the right to equality, as in Afghanistan, the world looked to the United Nations to take a stand.

2. Perhaps more than any other aspect of its work, the struggle for human rights resonated with the Organization's global constituency, and was deeply relevant to the lives of those most in need - the tortured, the oppressed, the silenced, the victims of "ethnic cleansing" and injustice. If in the face of such abuses the United Nations did not speak up and speak out, how would it answer that global constituency? It could not say that rights were relative, or that whatever happened inside a country's borders did not concern an organization of sovereign States. At the end of the twentieth century, one thing was clear: the United Nations could not claim to be what it was unless it set itself up as a staunch defender of human rights.

3. At the dawn of a new millennium, it was clear that the Organization's human rights mission began and ended with individuals and their universal and inalienable rights, namely the right to speak, act, grow, learn and live according to individual conscience. It was also clear that the Organization's mission was a work in progress. For every right proclaimed, hundreds of abuses were committed. For every voice whose freedom was secured, many more were threatened. For every woman or girl whose right to equality was upheld, thousands more suffered from discrimination and violence. For every child whose right to education and a peaceful childhood were protected, too many remained beyond the Organization's reach.

4. The Commission on Human Rights could claim with pride to have been the architect of the existing international human rights structure. It was the Commission which had hammered out the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the binding treaties which, taken together, had created an international code of human rights. Whether it was the struggle for gender equality and the rights of women, the elimination of racial discrimination, or protection of the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, the Commission had been a pioneer in establishing norms and promoting justice. In the vital work of implementation, it had made a significant contribution to promoting economic, social and cultural rights, and its work on the right to development had opened up new horizons. Recognizing that human rights were interrelated, indivisible and interdependent, the Commission had ensured that the implementation of social and economic rights had gone hand in hand with political and civil rights. Through technical cooperation for human rights at the local, national and regional levels, the Commission had helped to introduce human rights where they were most needed, in the lives of the

weakest and most vulnerable. In the important work of implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the tenth anniversary of which would be commemorated in 1999, it had reaffirmed the principle that human rights began at birth.

5. And yet gross and shocking violations of human rights continued to be committed daily around the world: they offended the world's conscience, outraged persons of goodwill, and undermined the deepest sense of a shared humanity. If the United Nations could not respond to such acts or step in where suffering was greatest, then the foundations which had been laid elsewhere would crumble beneath the weight of those violations. The Commission on Human Rights had long recognized that reality. On joining the United Nations, developing countries in particular had sought to enhance the Organization's capacity to respond to gross violations of human rights. Since then, a vast array of working groups, special rapporteurs, representatives, envoys and experts on human rights had travelled the world over, planting the flag of human rights, extending the reach of the Commission, and offering victims hope for a better, freer and less repressive future.

6. The achievements of the last 50 years were rooted in the universal acceptance of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration and in the equally universal abhorrence of practices for which there could be no excuse in any culture under any circumstances, for example torture, "ethnic cleansing", slavery or racial, sexual or religious discrimination. In an age of human rights, the United Nations must have the courage to recognize that, just as there were common aims, there were also common enemies. No one should be left in any doubt that for the mass murderers, the ethnic cleansers and those guilty of gross and shocking violations of human rights, impunity was unacceptable. The United Nations would never be a refuge for them, and its Charter would never be a source of comfort or justification. They were enemies, regardless of their race, religion or nation, and only their defeat would redeem the promise which the United Nations embodied.

7. At the current session, he had chosen to dwell not only on common aims and shared accomplishments, but also on the magnitude of the human rights abuses which the Organization was committed to ending. The current session of the Commission on Human Rights, the last of the twentieth century, was taking place under the dark cloud of genocide. Of all gross violations, genocide knew of no parallel in human history. The tragic irony of the age of human rights, in which greater numbers were enjoying human rights than ever before in history, was that it had been repeatedly darkened by outbursts of indiscriminate violence and organized mass killings. In Cambodia in the 1970s up to 2 million people had been killed by Pol Pot's regime. And in the current decade, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thousands upon thousands of human beings had been massacred for belonging to the wrong ethnic group. Although there were no independent observers on the ground, there were signs that the same thing was happening in Kosovo. The odious campaign of ethnic cleansing conducted by the Serbian authorities in Kosovo appeared to have just one aim: to expel from Kosovo or kill as many ethnic Albanians as possible, thereby denying a people their most basic rights to life, liberty and security. The result had been a humanitarian disaster throughout the region. It was deeply

regrettable that the international community, despite months of diplomatic efforts, had failed to prevent the disaster. However, the universal sense of outrage that had been provoked was a hopeful sign.

8. Slowly but surely, an international consensus was growing against the violent repression of minorities. That norm must take absolute precedence over concerns of sovereignty. It was a principle that protected minorities, and majorities too, from gross violations. The point should be made absolutely clear: even though the United Nations was an organization of Member States, the rights and ideals which it existed to protect were those of peoples. The Organization would always strive to place the human being at the centre of its activities. No Government had the right to hide behind national sovereignty in order to violate the rights or fundamental freedoms of its people. The human rights and fundamental freedoms of every person were sacred.

9. The evolving international norm would pose fundamental challenges to the United Nations to which it would have to respond, if it was not to betray the very ideals that had inspired its foundation. That hope for humanity had perhaps come too late for the desperate thousands who had been forcibly expelled from their homes in Kosovo, and for the hundreds if not thousands who had been murdered simply because of their identity. But it would not come too late for the United Nations if it emboldened the Organization to enter a new century with a renewed commitment to protecting the rights of every man, woman and child, regardless of their ethnic, national or religious origin.

STATEMENT BY MR. ALI MOHAMMED OTHMAN YASSIN, MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL OF THE SUDAN

10. Mr. YASSIN (Sudan) said his Government believed that the promotion and protection of human rights would be better served through cooperation, constructive dialogue, and recognition of the universality and indivisibility of human rights within the framework of respect for different cultures, without politicization. Furthermore, all categories of rights should be given equal attention. The Sudan hoped that reform of the human rights protection mechanisms would enhance the Commission's effectiveness in realizing its objectives within the framework of those principles.

11. His Government attached considerable importance to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, due to be held in 2001, and called for adequate arrangements to ensure its success, particularly the provision of adequate financial resources for the preparatory process. Considerable attention should also be devoted to realizing the right to development; it was unfortunate that coercive unilateral measures had deprived certain developing countries of that right. The destruction of the Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum was a flagrant example of the way in which the legitimate right to development and the health of a least developed country had been denied, with total disregard for international law and human rights principles.

12. Since the previous session of the Commission, a number of positive developments had occurred in the Sudan in the constitutional, political, legal and economic fields. Those achievements would definitely contribute to the

democratization and enhancement of the human rights situation in the country. The Constitution and its Bill of Rights, which conformed to international human rights instruments, had come into force in July 1998. A Constitutional Court had also been established to oversee its implementation. Aggrieved individuals could apply directly to the Court to challenge State actions which violated the Bill of Rights. In addition, a number of political parties could now engage freely in political activities under the Political Association Act of 1999, and all political detainees had been released. Freedom of expression and opinion was protected, and a considerable number of privately owned newspapers were now published in the country. Preparations were also being made for elections to State legislative councils, to be followed by general elections to the National Federal Assembly. A thorough review and scrutiny of all existing legislation was being conducted to ensure that it complied with the provisions of the Constitution.

13. Under the Constitution and the Khartoum Peace Agreement of April 1997 signed with seven of the southern rebel factions, and the agreement signed with the Nuba Mountains rebels, the Government was obliged to create the necessary conditions to promote local cultures and the languages and creeds of indigenous communities. The Constitution also guaranteed equitable power-sharing between the federal government and the state governments, which already exercised a degree of autonomy in the political, economic and social fields. Moreover, it was hoped that the revenue from Sudanese oil exports, which were scheduled to begin in July 1999, would help to improve essential public services and establish lasting peace.

14. Only peace would enable the Sudanese people to exercise their rights fully, be it their political rights or their right to development. The Government had made remarkable efforts in that field, resulting, for example, in the Khartoum Peace Agreement, which recognized the right to self-determination of the peoples of southern Sudan. Negotiations were also continuing with the remaining rebel faction, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), in the unremitting effort to reach a peace settlement. The Sudanese Government had always cooperated with the international community and had always been willing to accept ceasefires for humanitarian reasons. A comprehensive ceasefire had been declared in all operation zones in southern Sudan on 5 April 1999. It would come into force on 15 April following the expiry of the current partial ceasefire which had been declared earlier. The international community should exert pressure on the rebel movement to accept the comprehensive ceasefire with a view to making it permanent.

15. The Sudanese Government deplored the irresponsible attitude of the rebels who, in violation of universally recognized humanitarian norms, had recently abducted and executed four Sudanese nationals working for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The international community should not remain silent when faced with such an odious crime; it should condemn such acts in the strongest possible terms and take the necessary measures to prevent further atrocities by the rebel group concerned. Efforts should also be made to ensure that humanitarian assistance to the needy civilian population in the war-stricken areas was not disrupted. It was regrettable that the leader of the group responsible had been permitted to attempt to address the Commission under cover of a non-governmental organization (NGO), Christian Solidarity International (CSI). CSI should be

roundly condemned for endorsing that irresponsible and immoral act, and also for falsely accusing the Sudan of practising slavery. In fact, CSI was implicated in the abduction of children in the rebel-controlled zones, exploiting the practice in order to tarnish the reputation of the Sudan and its Government, and criminal proceedings had therefore been brought against the NGO.

16. His delegation hoped that the international community, through the Commission on Human Rights, would finally acknowledge the tremendous reforms undertaken by the Sudan and would encourage it to continue along the path of democratization and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

STATEMENT BY MR. AZEDDINE LARAKI, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

17. Mr. LARAKI (Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had long ago warned of the seriousness of the situation in Kosovo and the victimization of the Kosovars. It had also denounced the genocide being practised by Serbian forces against Muslims in Kosovo and had requested international protection for them.

18. Blatantly ignoring attempts to resolve the conflict, the Serbian Government had obstinately pressed ahead with its policy of ethnic cleansing, thereby provoking a humanitarian tragedy and a serious military escalation with completely unpredictable consequences for the inhabitants of Kosovo and their fundamental rights.

19. While the objective of military intervention was to put a stop to the despicable racist policy of the Serbian forces, the international community should also make every effort to prevent the expulsion of Kosovo Muslims and ensure that offers by various States to host them were not exploited by the Serbian regime to empty that corner of Europe of its Muslim inhabitants and prevent them from returning home. The international community needed to mobilize in order to fight racism and injustice and secure the victory of the rule of law throughout Europe at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

STATEMENT BY MR. SARTAJ AZIZ, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PAKISTAN

20. Mr. AZIZ (Pakistan) said that the world currently faced two crises: an economic crisis arising from the financial collapse in East Asia, and a political crisis manifested in conflicts and wars around the world. The economic crisis had not only led to an economic downturn but had also resulted in a massive deterioration in living standards for millions of people. An accentuation of inequality between rich and poor, within and among nations, had been observed over the years. To overcome the world economic crisis, it was important to revive growth. But such growth should be equitable, and it was also necessary to promote "globalization with a human face". The Commission on Human Rights could play a significant role by making the right to development a reality and giving it priority in its work.

21. The impact of military, political and humanitarian crises in a globalized world was more severe and more widespread. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights had correctly observed, the most serious

human rights violations occurred during armed conflicts. In Kosovo, the intensification of ethnic cleansing had resulted in the uprooting and expulsion of 600,000 ethnic Albanians, in addition to the 200,000 who had been displaced earlier inside the province. It was regrettable that the Security Council had been unable to respond to the grave political crisis in Kosovo and the resulting massive human tragedy. It was to be hoped that other organs of the United Nations, in particular the Commission, would be able to respond to the Kosovo crisis with courage and clarity. To that end, Pakistan would introduce a draft resolution on behalf of the States members of the OIC regarding the situation of human rights in Kosovo (E/CN.4/1999/L.3), which it hoped would be adopted by the Commission given that the unfolding tragedy in the region required urgent action.

22. First and foremost, it was important to avoid all legal or political confusion. The bombing by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had perhaps precipitated the ethnic cleansing, but the cleansing had been planned well in advance and would have occurred in any case. The root cause of the Kosovo crisis was the systematic repression by Belgrade of the fundamental rights of the people of Kosovo.

23. Second, concerted international action was needed to ensure the provision of relief to the Kosovo refugees and displaced persons. Neighbouring countries required urgent and adequate international support to cope with the massive influx of refugees into their territory. Pakistan had sent relief supplies to Tirana and would continue to do so within its modest means.

24. Third, the international community must plan for the early return of Kosovo refugees to their homes in conditions of safety and dignity. Pakistan was also prepared to contribute in a tangible way to that process.

25. Fourth, the international community should find a viable political solution for Kosovo which would enable the Kosovars to determine their own destiny. The Foreign Ministers of the OIC contact group, in cooperation with the members of the international contact group, NATO members, the Russian Federation, and the Kosovo political leadership, would strive to develop a concerted programme to find just, peaceful and lasting solutions to the conflict.

26. Regarding the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, Security Council resolution 47 (1948) had prescribed the exercise of self-determination by the Kashmiri people through a plebiscite. The resolution, which had been adopted 50 years previously, had never been implemented. Nevertheless, that right did exist and the Kashmiri people had continued to struggle for it with the moral, political and diplomatic support of Pakistan and in spite of the brutally repressive yet unsuccessful measures taken by the Indian armed forces. The human rights violations in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir had been amply documented and were universally acknowledged. The Pakistani Prime Minister had displayed political courage in initiating a political dialogue with India. That dialogue had resulted in the Lahore Declaration of 23 February 1999, in accordance with which the Prime Ministers of the two countries had agreed to intensify efforts to settle their differences as quickly as possible. It was clear, however, that relations between the two countries could not be

normalized on a lasting basis until a just and peaceful solution had been found to the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, in accordance with Security Council resolutions.

27. India could not talk peace with Pakistan while waging war against the Kashmiri people. The Pakistani Government therefore urged India to end the grave and systematic human rights violations which were continuing to take place in Jammu and Kashmir. It hoped that India would agree to a number of specific confidence-building measures such as the reinforcement of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), the deployment of impartial human rights monitors in Jammu and Kashmir, an agreement to allow the presence of international human rights organizations in Kashmir, the development of ICRC humanitarian assistance in Kashmir, discontinuation of military incursions into Kashmiri towns and villages, and the gradual reduction of the Indian armed forces deployed in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

28. His delegation hoped that the international community, especially the Commission on Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, would support the implementation of measures to increase the likelihood that dialogue between Pakistan and India would have a successful outcome.

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING:

(a) QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CYPRUS (agenda item 9) (continued) (E/CN.4/1999/7, 25-27, 32-38, 40-43, 107, 117, 119, 121, 125-127, and 129-139; E/CN.4/1999/NGO/3, 11, 12, 16-20, 28 and 61; S/1998/581, A/52/539, A/53/402 and 490)

29. Mr. QIAO Zonghuai (China) said that the Chinese people had profoundly changed their destiny in the course of the twentieth century. Until 1949, China had been under the yoke of foreign powers which had imposed unequal treaties, plundered resources and trampled on the rights and dignity of the Chinese people. When the People's Republic of China had been founded, the Chinese population had stood at approximately 500 million, 400 million of them starving. The population of China was now 1.3 billion, and their basic needs were on the whole satisfied. In recent decades the Chinese authorities had also made significant efforts in the field of human rights.

30. China had experienced an extraordinary year in 1998. Externally, the Government and the people had together confronted the Asian financial crisis; domestically, the country had experienced extremely severe flooding. The national economy had grown at 7.8 per cent and living standards and enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights had improved remarkably. Considerable progress had also been made in safeguarding civil and political rights and strengthening democracy. A recent amendment to the Constitution stipulated that the People's Republic of China was building a socialist State founded on the rule of law. A number of laws concerning the people's fundamental rights had been revised with a view to strengthening democratic participation by citizens. Steps had also been taken to strengthen the mechanisms for implementing the law and improving the protection of civil rights by ensuring enhanced administration of justice. In September 1998, China had received

Mrs. Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the two sides had reached agreement in principle on future cooperation. An expert team had recently been sent to China by the High Commissioner to make an assessment of cooperation needs. The Chinese Government had signed the two International Human Rights Covenants, sponsored a range of activities to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and embarked on a dialogue with a number of Western countries.

31. While recognizing the universality of human rights, China believed that the realization of those rights must depend on the conditions specific to each country. Culture and traditions dating back thousands of years had a significant bearing on modern Chinese society. Like many developing or recently independent countries, China attached great importance to its independence and stability. Owing to different national circumstances, it was normal for countries to hold differing views on human rights. Such a stance should not, however, be an obstacle to dialogue based on equality and mutual respect. The Chinese Government had noted with appreciation that the European Union had decided, for the second time, not to introduce a draft resolution on the situation in China at the current session of the Commission, yet it was deeply regrettable that the Government of the United States had announced that it would not follow suit owing to a "sharp deterioration in China's human rights record". The United States had attacked the Chinese authorities for prosecuting a number of criminals. However, those persons had been prosecuted for endangering State security, not for exercising their freedom of expression or association, and they had received a fair trial. In accordance with the two Covenants, enjoyment of rights could be restricted to safeguard State security or public order, and in all countries, including the United States, criminals were punished for endangering State security. The decision of the United States delegation to introduce a draft resolution condemning China had not been prompted by a genuine desire to protect human rights in China, but rather by domestic political considerations. To take action on such a resolution would defile the noble cause of human rights and damage the credibility of the Commission. Instead of pointing the finger at others, the United States would be well advised to put its own house in order.

32. Mr. AMAT FORÉS (Cuba), recalling that the Commission had rejected the draft resolution on the human rights situation in Cuba introduced by the United States at the previous session, said his delegation had hoped that the current session would proceed in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding. But unfortunately, while continuing its attempts to strangle the Cuban economy, the United States had not abandoned its political vendetta Since it lacked the courage to assume responsibility for its actions, the United States had instructed the Czech Republic, seconded by Poland, to introduce a new draft resolution on Cuba, seeking to give the impression that other countries wanted the Commission to monitor the human rights situation in the country. However, it was no secret that the draft resolution had been concocted several weeks previously in Washington. Ever since the fifty-third session of the General Assembly and the previous session of the Economic and Social Council, the United States had been on the lookout for a compliant agent to execute its plan. Having been rebuffed several times, it had eventually prevailed upon countries indebted to the United States to act as accomplices in exchange for certain favours.

33. As a pretext to reopen the debate about human rights in Cuba, reference had been made to the recent adoption by the Cuban Parliament of the Protection of Independence and the National Economy Act and the trial of four Cubans in the pay of a foreign Government. The Act in question had cracked down on offences relating to collaboration with the enemy, not on alleged offences relating to personal opinions. It not only protected Cuba's sovereignty and the rights of Cubans, but also the citizens of other countries affected by the sanctions which the United States had imposed as part of its embargo against Cuba. A number of States, for example Canada, Mexico, Argentina and certain member States of the European Union, had also been compelled to take steps to protect their sovereignty and independence after the United States Congress had adopted certain decisions with extraterritorial scope. The Act adopted recently by the Cuban Parliament was a response to the aggressive measures taken against Cuba by the United States, particularly the 1992 Torricelli amendment and the 1996 Helms-Burton Act. The four persons who had recently been tried in Cuba had been sentenced to between three and a half and five years' imprisonment. In the United States, persons found guilty of infringing the blockade were liable to a custodia, sentence of up to 10 years' imprisonment or a fine of $250,000.

34. The introduction of a new draft resolution against Cuba, even one that was moderate in tone, would restart a spiral of confrontation and politicization, which in turn would damage the Commission's credibility. The draft resolution highlighted the fact that the Commission's work was vitiated by double standards and selectivity. There was no contradiction between Cuba's policy and the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights; the true contradiction was the one between the Organization and those who wished, like the United States, to transform the Commission into a compliant instrument of their foreign policy.

35. Cuba had built a participatory and collectivist society in which social justice prevailed. Its press was not beholden to petty-minded interests. There was but one party in the country, not an electioneering or divisive force but the embodiment of a single social project. Cubans respected the political systems of other countries and asked only that the same courtesy should be extended to them.

36. Ms. SUTOYO (Indonesia) said that it was unfortunate that, in the past, rhetoric and antagonism had won the day over dialogue and understanding. His delegation hoped that the Commission would henceforth consider the human rights situation in every country objectively, and that it would take account of the significant progress achieved by States as well as the difficulties faced by developing countries. The legitimate concern of the international community regarding the protection of human rights should be expressed in the context of international cooperation, which was one of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

37. Indonesia was undergoing a process of unprecedented reform in the political, economic, social and legal sectors. Human rights promotion lay at the core of those reforms. Freedom of expression and freedom to demonstrate, the release of political prisoners, the emergence of some 50 new political parties, and the ever-growing number of NGOs had become a reality in Indonesia. In line with the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and

Programme of Action, on 25 June 1998 President Habibie had officially launched the National Plan of Action on Human Rights for the period from 1998 to 2003, which would be implemented by a National Committee on Human Rights consisting of senior Government officials and representatives of civil society. The national plan was based on four principles: the ratification of international human rights instruments; awareness-raising and education in the field of human rights; priority protection of basic rights, particularly those of vulnerable groups; and implementation of the international human rights instruments which had already been ratified. The Government had also formed a team of legal experts, in cooperation with the House of Representatives, to review all national laws and regulations with a view to ensuring that they were consistent with international human rights standards. Having ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1998, Indonesia was currently preparing to ratify other international human rights instruments including the two Covenants, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention (No. 105) concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour, the ILO Convention (No. 111) concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation and ILO Convention (No. 138) concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II).

38. The Indonesian Government had given top priority to resolving the conflict in East Timor. An autonomy plan for East Timor was being negotiated within the framework of a tripartite dialogue, and would be put to a direct vote of the East Timorese in July. On 27 January 1999 the Indonesian Government had announced that should the autonomy offer be rejected, it would request the new People's Consultative Assembly to consider the separation of East Timor from the Republic of Indonesia. His delegation therefore urged Portugal to adopt a positive approach.

39. The economic crises and the political changes had had an impact on social behaviour. The Indonesian Government was making every effort to address the root causes and prevent the recurrence of human rights violations. In addition, the Government was committed to continuing its cooperation with the Commission's mechanisms and international NGOs, as evidenced by the visit to Indonesia of an Amnesty International delegation in September 1998 and a delegation from the International Commission of Jurists at the end of March 1999.

40. Mr. MAZA (Service, Peace and Justice in Latin America) said that the situation of impunity which continued to prevail in Mexico was of grave concern. A number of United Nations bodies and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had reported a serious deterioration of the human rights situation in Mexico. In its resolution 1998/4, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities had requested the Mexican authorities to give high priority to combating impunity among perpetrators of serious human rights violations, especially those who had victimized large numbers of indigenous people, and called on the signatories of the San Andrés Agreements to relaunch a process of dialogue. In addition, the lack of independence of the malfunctioning Mexican judiciary had

endangered the rule of law; trials were compromised by serious irregularities. Although a national human rights institution did exist, it was ineffective because it was not independent of the executive, its investigative methods left much to be desired and it failed to check whether its recommendations had been effectively implemented. Furthermore, the war on drug trafficking, the counter-insurgency measures and the policing activities of the armed forces had led to serious violations (arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial executions).

41. In view of the situation, 96 Mexican NGOs and 26 international NGOs requested the Commission to urge Mexico to take steps to combat human rights violations, for example by reforming the justice system, strengthening Government mechanisms to protect human rights, and organizing a prompt visit by the High Commissioner for Human Rights with a view to making an assessment of the situation. The NGOs also requested the High Commissioner to examine the human rights situation in Mexico in the light of the information available to various United Nations bodies; to urge the Mexican Government to issue invitations to the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; and to appoint a special rapporteur on the situation in Mexico. Since the Mexican Government had already issued invitations to the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Commission should press the Mexican Government to arrange dates for their visits during the current session.

42. Mr. FAYEK (Arab Organization for Human Rights) said that since the previous session of the Commission, Arab countries had recorded a number of positive developments in the field of human rights. In Egypt, the number of terrorist acts had decreased significantly and the Government had released over 2,000 Islamic detainees. In Morocco, the Government had started a procedure to clarify the fate of disappeared persons and review the status of political prisoners. In Lebanon, the new Government had promised to uphold basic freedoms and had cancelled an arbitrary decision to ban peaceful marches. In Qatar, the authorities had announced a programme of political reform including municipal elections in which women had participated for the first time.

43. Unfortunately, a long list of human rights violations remained. The Palestinian people were still deprived of their inalienable rights. In that connection, the General Assembly's decision to hold a conference in July 1999 for all parties to the Geneva Convention with a view to applying the fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Palestinian territories should be welcomed. In Iraq, tens of thousands of innocent victims, mostly children, had continued to suffer as a result of international sanctions, and the acute situation had been aggravated by the military strikes against the country in December 1998. A lack of political will by the Somali leadership had prevented the implementation of the peace agreement signed in Cairo at the beginning of 1998; fighting had continued and increasing numbers of civilians had been killed. In the Sudan, despite the adoption of a new Constitution, nothing had been done to normalize political life; political pluralism had been replaced by a complex procedure for registering political parties and no solution had

been found to the conflict in the south of the country. In Algeria, thousands had fallen victim to violence and terrorism; it was to be hoped that the leadership due to be elected in April would start a constructive dialogue with all political forces in order to put an end to the tragedy which had engulfed the country.

44. Away from areas of chronic crisis, human rights violations had been committed in a number of Arab countries. People had been arrested, injured or murdered during the repression of demonstrations in Iraq, the Sudan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Bahrain. Prisoners had died following mistreatment in Egypt, Algeria, Iraq and Bahrain. Thousands of people had gone missing in Algeria, Iraq and Lebanon. Dozens of people had gone missing in Egypt, the Sudan and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. In a number of countries, human rights organizations had been singled out for criticism and human rights activists had been arrested. The Arab Organization for Human Rights hoped that the Commission would contribute to lifting the sanctions against Iraq and adopt a programme to implement the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

45. Mr. DJAMIN (Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB)) said that the ongoing transition in Indonesia had not taken place without violence and human rights violations. Since early 1998, the army had arbitrarily detained thousands of supporters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in an attempt to ensure the re-election of President Suharto. Activists had been abducted, tortured and secretly detained. The fate of 14 of them was still unknown. The political violence had continued with the bloody repression of peaceful demonstrations by students. The murder of four students in mid-May had directly or indirectly triggered the tragic riots in Djakarta during which at least 1,190 people had been burned to death, 27 people had been shot by the security forces, and 91 had been injured. Ethnic Chinese women had been gang-raped. To date, no serious measures had been taken to punish those responsible.

46. The accession to power of President Habibie had not brought about any meaningful change in the human rights situation in Indonesia. On the contrary, the security forces had continued to suppress the students' political aspirations as brutally as before. Some 19 people had been killed and hundreds had been injured in Djakarta the previous November. Furthermore, the new regime had systematically mobilized civilians to confront student demonstrations, thereby pitting one section of the population against another. The Habibie regime had been in place for less than a year, and almost continuous rioting had destroyed people's property and places of worship. Hundreds of lives had been lost all over the archipelago. The State was strongly implicated in the disturbances at Aceh, Kerawang and Ambon, and also in the mysterious serial murders in Banyuwangi.

47. To encourage respect for human rights in Indonesia, United Nations human rights bodies and procedures should keep themselves abreast of those developments and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions should visit Indonesia.

48. Mr. HENDARDI (Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme) said that, unfortunately, violence had continued to occur in Indonesia despite the

repeated commitment made by President Habibie and the chief of the armed forces, General Wiranto, to democracy and respect for human rights. The lack of political will to prosecute the former dictator Suharto and the fact that no specific steps had been taken to punish those responsible for human rights abuses had encouraged scepticism about that commitment. The court martial of 11 members of the army special forces responsible for kidnapping student and political activists in 1998 had failed to end the impunity which had existed in Indonesia since 1965 because the defendants had been exonerated.

49. All the steps taken by the new Government to promote and protect human rights in Indonesia, such as launching the National Action Plan on Human Rights, issuing invitations to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, had not altered the reality on the ground. The State's failure to contain the conflict among various ethnic and religious groups and the communal violence in several parts of Indonesia would create chaos which in turn could legitimize the installation of a strong military regime on the pretext of preserving national identity. Furthermore, the prerequisites for ensuring the regular conduct of elections in June 1999 were not in place.

50. In the light of the foregoing, the Commission should request the Indonesian Government to invite the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to visit the country in 1999, and to verify follow-up to the recommendations by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

51. Ms. CERVANTES VEZQUEZ (Organization of the Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAL)) said that item 9 of the agenda had become a stick used by Northern countries to beat Southern countries on matters concerning human rights. Furthermore, most of the situations considered under item 9 concerned third world countries and there was no special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the industrialized Western countries. It was also clear that States which passed judgement on the situation in other States were often swayed by political considerations. They had therefore abandoned the objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity which should be the keynotes of such an exercise. The consideration of the human rights situation in Cuba, which was once again the subject of a draft resolution, was a perfect example. The United States had sought to turn the Commission's work into an instrument of its foreign policy by continuing to meddle in the affairs of a small country which had repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to the human rights of its own people and those of other third world peoples.

52. Human rights were indeed universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, but nevertheless certain countries had attempted to impose purportedly universal models on other countries without taking account of their historical and cultural peculiarities. Moreover, it was unconscionable that Northern countries should exploit human rights as an instrument of political and economic blackmail, making them a condition of their relations with Southern countries while at the same time taking coercive unilateral measures without regard for the massive and flagrant human rights violations caused by those measures.

53. OSPAAL also condemned the frequent practice of the Commission, when considering item 9, to give credence to allegations of failure to observe human rights while ignoring the importance for certain third world countries of certain fundamental questions such as the right to self-determination, the right to development, the right of defence and the right to protect the environment. It was time to adopt a more comprehensive and up-to-date approach to human rights in order to tackle the many violations arising from the social injustices and inequalities proliferating in an age of neo-liberal globalization. At the dawn of the new millennium, it was necessary to identify without delay means to effectively address the problems confronting the human race, which in many cases endangered the most basic of all human rights, namely the right to life.

54. Mr. MORA SECADE (Centro de Estudios Europeos) noted with regret that the United States had once again used various manoeuvres to pressure other States to have the Commission examine the "situation of human rights in Cuba". Although it was impossible to prove that the introduction of a draft resolution on that question by the Czech Republic and Poland was linked to the recent decision to admit them to NATO, it was nevertheless clear that the United States had experienced difficulty in finding a State willing to render it that service. No one believed that the United States Government cared anything for the human rights of the Cuban people when for 40 years it had been violating those rights by imposing an economic, financial and diplomatic blockade in order to force Cuba to abandon the economic, social and political system which it had chosen as part of its right to self-determination.

55. Such was the purpose of the Helms-Burton Act, which had been in force for three years. It aimed to destroy the Cuban revolution by hampering the country's economic development and encouraging internal subversive elements. Every year the United States Congress had adopted new provisions to ensure implementation of the Act, including sanctions in the form of fines or custodial sentences for violators. In addition, the United States Government had bankrolled a number of NGOs, human rights protection movements and allegedly independent media sources which were in fact the tools of its policy of aggression against Cuba. The Cuban people were defending themselves against persons working for a foreign power. However, the authorities had not resorted to torture, death squads, extrajudicial executions or forced disappearances as had unfortunately happened in a number of other countries; they were operating within the terms of an Act designed to protect the country's independence and sovereignty. The Cuban people were entitled to act thus; refusal to recognize that right would be tantamount to asking Cuba not to defend itself against an aggressor.

56. Mr. KALATTAS (International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities) said that the Cyprus problem had been on the agenda of the Commission and other international forums for the last 25 years. Since the invasion of 20 July 1974, the Turkish military occupiers had committed atrocities against the Greek Cypriot indigenous population, such as the bombing of civilian targets, cold-blooded murders, torture, and mass rapes. In the occupied zone, one third of the Greek Cypriot population had been forced to abandon their ancestral homes and become refugees in their own country. A total of 1,619 were still reported missing. A number of United Nations bodies, as well as the Movement of

Non-Aligned Countries, the Commonwealth and various European institutions, had issued resolutions demanding the urgent return of the refugees to their homes and the restoration of the Greek Cypriots' human rights. Not only had Turkey refused to comply with those resolutions, but it had also pursued a policy of destruction and colonization in the occupied zone. The number of Turkish colonists, estimated at 100,000, added to the 35,000 Turkish occupation troops on the island, far outnumbered the Turkish Cypriots in the occupied part of Cyprus.

57. The unilateral declaration of independence of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in November 1983 contravened the 1960 Treaty establishing the Republic of Cyprus, the Treaty of Guarantee of the same year, the Charter of the United Nations, various Security Council resolutions and the principles of international law. It had therefore been condemned by a number of international bodies. Turkey was legally responsible for the unlawful declaration, which constituted a new form of aggression against Cyprus. It was generally believed that, unless the Security Council imposed sanctions, Turkey would never comply with the United Nations resolutions on Cyprus, simply because the past 25 years had clearly proved that Turkish interests were served by the status quo.

58. The International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities therefore appealed to all the parties concerned - States, international organizations, legal bodies and institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights - to focus their attention on the breaches of international law and the human rights violations committed by Turkey in Cyprus, and also to exert pressure for the imposition of sanctions with a view to compelling Turkey to abandon its long-term expansionist schemes against Cyprus.

59. Mr. MUNAVAR (Liberation) said that the Commission should focus its attention on the situation of human rights in Yemen, where cases of arbitrary detention, torture and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment were widespread. Bombardment of civilian communities, including one incident in 1998 in which hundreds of women and children had been killed, kidnapping, murders and terrorist acts committed by groups colluding with the authorities had all continued, despite the commitments by the Yemeni Government to the Secretary-General to pursue national reconciliation and respect human rights. The Commission should examine the human rights situation in Yemen and the Yemeni Government should abide by its international obligations.

60. Liberation was also concerned by the fate of the population of the province of Sind in Pakistan, where the Pakistani Government had declared a state of emergency in 1998, Parliament had been suspended and military courts had handed down death sentences in flagrant violation of the rights enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights. Human rights violations such as rape, torture and death in custody, which had been reported by the relevant Special Rapporteurs and Amnesty International, were being used by Pakistan to suppress the desire of the population of Sind for self-determination.

61. The Commission should also examine the situation of human rights in the Indonesian province of Aceh, where since 1989 the number of cases of killing, disappearance, rape and torture by members of the Indonesian armed forces

against members of the National Liberation Front Aceh Sumatra had steadily increased. In January, 38 men had been imprisoned and beaten by a group of approximately 100 soldiers. Five of the men had been killed. In another incident, soldiers had opened fire on a crowd returning from a public rally, killing an unknown number of people. Corpses had been fished out of a river bound hand and foot, and other people had simply disappeared. The Indonesian Government should be urged to bring proceedings against the known perpetrators of those crimes, and to provide for the thousands of women and children who had been widowed and orphaned during the past 10 years of terror.

62. Mr. AKITO (International Buddhist Foundation) condemned the brutal attack of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on a sacred temple in Sri Lanka. The wilful destruction of the monument, classified as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was part of the escalating cycle of violence between the Sri Lankan army and the terrorists. Violence simply begot more violence, and failed to solve any civil or political problems. Those responsible for human rights violations, whether alleged liberation movements or Governments, should be brought before competent national or international tribunals. Buddhists everywhere should advocate non-violence as a way of life and a lasting solution to all problems. For its part, the Commission on Human Rights, which in a sense represented the conscience of the international community, should not allow purveyors of death to address it and seek to justify their own barbarism by invoking the atrocities of others. The Commission should find a suitable way to condemn Governments that were guilty of human rights abuses while rejecting those who attempted to glorify criminal organizations.

63. Mr. PARY (Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru") said that current international law condemned all aggression against sovereign countries and promoted the establishment of friendly relations between nations founded on the right of peoples to self-determination and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The Security Council was the only body empowered to maintain international peace and security.

64. Nevertheless, in December 1998, in defiance of those principles, the United States, with the support of the United Kingdom and the complicity of Turkey, Spain and neighbouring Arab countries, and under the indifferent, selfish and hypocritical gaze of international public opinion, had launched a ferocious attack upon the Iraqi people. The allegedly "surgical and clean" war waged at a distance had resulted in the destruction of the Basra oil refinery, of key importance for Iraqi crude oil exports under the oil-for-food programme. Successive wars and economic sanctions had returned the country to the pre-industrial age. Operation Desert Fox had also revealed that inspectors of the United Nations Special Commission for the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (UNSCOM), and especially its chief, had engaged in espionage activities for the benefit of the great Powers.

65. As the Commission was examining human rights violations around the world, NATO bombs and missiles were raining down on the towns and villages of a sovereign country, Yugoslavia, without any declaration of war, thereby provoking a mass exodus of refugees.

66. In blatant violation of General Assembly resolutions, the United States had also strengthened its economic and commercial blockade of Cuba, thereby condemning millions to a slow death.

67. The Commission should take specific steps to end the Western sanctions against Cuba, Iraq and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and thus respect the right of peoples to self-determination.

68. Mr. WONG (International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty) said that fighting between Muslims and Christians on the Indonesian island of Ambon had resulted in a number of deaths. Many churches had also been destroyed or damaged. A lack of neutrality and impartiality on the part of the security forces had also been widely reported. For example, in the Christian village of Benteng Karang, in northern Ambon, 15 Christians had been massacred and hacked to pieces on 20 January 1999. Four members of the security forces arriving at the scene had reportedly embraced the rioters before departing. If it wished to prevent an escalation in the violence, the Indonesian Government should take urgent action to ensure that the security forces protected all religious communities impartially. It should also permit the rebuilding of churches and Christian schools which had been destroyed or damaged.

69. In India, particularly in the states of Gujarat and Orissa, Hindu extremists had burned and pillaged churches and terrorized the Christian community. For example, on 23 January 1999 Hindu extremists had burned to death an Australian missionary, Graham Staines, and his two sons aged 10 and 8 in the village of Manoharpur in Orissa State. The Indian Government needed to take urgent measures to protect religious freedom and bring inciters of religious hatred to justice

70. In Burma, the military regime was continuing to carry out its policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide against minority peoples such as the Karen, Karenni and Shan. International sanctions should be imposed on the Burmese regime, and its leaders should be brought before an international tribunal to answer for the crime of genocide and other crimes against humanity.

71. Mr. SAFI (World Muslim Congress) said that although India claimed to be the world's largest democracy, its human rights record was atrocious. Over half of India's population were outcasts. The "untouchables" were the most disadvantaged group. They were born and died in servitude and were often victims of violence. Dalit women and girls were bought and sold and subjected to all forms of exploitation, particularly of a sexual nature.

72. Religious minorities, especially Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Buddhists, were victims of religious intolerance, as demonstrated by the massacre of Sikhs in 1984 in New Delhi and other regions of India; the destruction of the Babri mosque by Hindu fundamentalists; the massacre of Muslims in Bombay in 1992; recent killings of Christians, particularly in the State of Gujarat; the murder of Hindu pundits in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir; atrocities committed with complete impunity by Indian military and paramilitary forces in Kashmir; and the campaign of repression against Bodos, Nagas and Assamese in the north-east of the country.

73. Rapes, prostitution (especially child prostitution), forced child labour, bride-burning, dowry deaths and female infanticide were also widespread in India.

74. The Commission should therefore invite the thematic rapporteurs to investigate the human rights abuses and excesses in India and Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

75. Mr. OJO (Article XIX: The International Centre Against Censorship) said that much remained to be done in Nigeria to ensure a successful transition to democracy. In particular, steps should be taken to repeal the repressive military decrees which were still in force, namely the Federal Military Government (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decree No. 12 of 1994, the Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree No. 107 of 1993, and the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 2 of 1984.

76. Journalists and media organizations had continued to suffer harassment. In August 1998, Okozie Amarube, a journalist working for News Service, had been shot by the police. News Service had openly criticized the Government and denounced corruption. No investigation had yet taken place. In February, the police had confiscated copies of the newspaper The News, which had been intending to publish a story on official corruption during the Abacha era. The Commission should therefore renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Nigeria for at least another year in order to check that genuine democracy had returned to the country.

77. Violations of fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression, in addition to massacres and disappearances, had continued in Algeria. While many abuses had been committed by shadowy armed groups, others had undoubtedly been the work of government forces. The almost total absence of independent information on the conflict had simply encouraged impunity. While less strictly censored than in recent years, the media remained severely constrained.

78. It was unclear why the Algerian Government had consistently blocked the Commission's efforts to establish the truth, notably by means of a joint visit to Algeria by the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. If the Algerian authorities failed to receive the Special Rapporteurs within three months of the forthcoming elections, the Commission should appoint a Special Rapporteur on the situation in Algeria.

79. Ms. AGDAS (Fédération démocratique internationale des femmes) said that, having been refused political asylum by Italy and the Russian Federation, Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), had been kidnapped in Kenya in an operation involving the Turkish, Israeli, United States, Greek and Kenyan authorities. He would probably be sentenced to death after a trial in which the fundamental right of defence would be violated.

80. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that "it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion

against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law". Furthermore, in 1973 the General Assembly had established that struggles against colonial and racist regimes were legitimate and fully conformed with the principles of international law, and that attempts to suppress rebellion against such regimes were incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations. Abdullah Ocalan had simply demanded the right of self-determination for his people and had waged war against the Turkish Government's oppression of the Kurdish people.

81. The Commission should condemn the policy of the Turkish Government and help to find a peaceful political solution to the war in Kurdistan.

82. Mr. GRACIA HENRIQUEZ (National Union of Jurists of Cuba) said that the Protection of Independence and the National Economy Act which had recently been adopted in Cuba was intended not to suppress freedom of expression but to strengthen the array of Cuban legislation enabling the country to deal with the political, economic and military war being waged against it by the United States. The Act made it an offence to pass information to the United States Government in execution of the Helms-Burton Act, which had been unanimously condemned by the international community. It also penalized persons who collaborated with the United States media to promote the economic blockade and the imposition of sanctions against Cuba, and persons who caused public disturbances or committed acts intended to sabotage economic relations or foreign investment in Cuba.

83. The 30-year campaign of State terrorism waged by the United States Government, which harboured the terrorist groups that had planted bombs in Cuban hotels, violated the right of peoples to self-determination and was an unconscionable assault on the country's national sovereignty. Accordingly, Cuban jurists urged the Commission to appoint a special rapporteur to investigate the human rights abuses perpetrated by the United States, including the victimization of the Cuban people.

84. Ms. PARKER (International Educational Development, Inc.) said that 38 countries in the world were currently affected by war and up to 30 more could explode into war at any time. Africa alone was the scene of 16 wars. In Sierra Leone, the number of dead, injured and displaced persons and people at risk of starvation was very high. Wars were being fought in the Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and, to a lesser extent, in Rwanda, Uganda, Lesotho, the Comoros, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Angola, not forgetting the conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea and Morocco and Western Sahara. The referendum for Western Sahara had once again been postponed.

85. In Asia, the Sri Lankan Government had ignored the attempts by the international community to settle the conflict through negotiation. In Burma, the refusal of the illegal regime in power to take account of the aspirations of ethnic minorities had led to armed conflict. In Kashmir, the plebiscite to enable the population to determine its status had still not been organized. In Indian-occupied Kashmir, the Indian armed forces had continued to commit serious breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

86. Although the efforts made by President Habibie to remedy the situation in East Timor were encouraging, the Indonesian Government still had to determine the status of the Moluccas and Aceh in the context of the 1948 agreements concluded under the auspices of the United Nations. The Commission should urge the Indonesian authorities to make every effort to halt the confrontations between the settlers from Java and the population of the Moluccas.

87. In Mexico, the authorities had committed human rights abuses and violations of humanitarian law. They had been implicated in the massacre of indigenous people at Acteal and El Bosque in December 1997. In addition, the Mexican Government had tried to sabotage the San Andrés Agreement with the Ejército Zapatista para la Liberación Nacional (EZLN). It was encouraging that the Sub-Commission had adopted a resolution condemning the flagrant human rights violations in Mexico. The Commission should appoint a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Mexico.

88. Ms. WENYAN (All-China Women's Federation) said that the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral dialogue with a view to improving human rights protection was an encouraging sign. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world, such protection was still inadequate. In the United States, for example, 18 per cent of women had been victims of rape or attempted rape in 1998. A study of 152 countries carried out in 1998 by the International Labour Organization had revealed that the United States had the worst labour protection for women. For example, women in the United States had only three months of unpaid maternity leave. Child neglect and child suicides were other very alarming problems. Racial discrimination and police violence were commonplace. The United States had not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

89. Abroad, NATO, led by the United States, had used modern weapons against a small sovereign State, thereby provoking the displacement of large numbers of innocent civilians including women and children. The military campaign was a cause for indignation and should be halted immediately.

90. It was to be hoped that, in the future, the Commission would play a more constructive role in the promotion and protection of human rights and that the human rights abuses which had occurred in the twentieth century would not be repeated in the coming century.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.